

**INCREDIBLE**

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10 CENTS

NOV

# SCIENCE FICTION



OUTRAGEOUS 1950s EC COMICS!



**INCREDIBLE**



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CANADA

# SCIENCE FICTION



# FALLEN IDOL

WE FOUND THE GOD ON THE THIRD DAY. WE'VE CROSSED THE MIGHTY RIVER TO THE DEAD PLACE, AND THIS TIME, THE GREAT MANY-LEGGED BEAST HAD NOT TAKEN THEIR TOLL OF US. WE'D BROUGHT THE MUSIC OF THE OLD ONES... AND ON THE THIRD DAY, IN A HOLLOW MADE BY RULERS OF BRASS AND METAL, WE FOUND THE GOD. AND THE OTHERS FELL UPON THEIR FACES AND WORSHIPED.

THE OTHERS GROVELED IN THE GLD BEFORE THE GOD, BUT I DID NOT. THE GOD STOOD WITH HIS MIGHTY ARMS OUTSTRETCHED, AND ON HIS CHEST WAS THE SYMBOL OF THE LIGHTNING. YET EVEN SO, I DID NOT GROVEL... I ASKED



I KNEW THAT THIS GOD WAS NOT A GOD, BUT WAS WHAT THE OLD ONES HAD CALLED A BEAST. I REMEMBERED THE TALES I'D HEARD... A GOD...

...NO, THEY WERE NOT AS WE... THE OLD ONES? THEY LIVED IN THE DEAD PLACE, ACROSS THE MIGHTY RIVER, AND THEY DID NOT MOOT. THEIR WOODS DID NOT PLANT ON ASAP...



THE OLD ONES HAD BUILT MANSION IN THOSE DAYS. THEY BUILT MACHINES, CALLED ROBOTS, AND THE ROBOTS BUILT MORE ROBOTS. AND ONLY THE ROBOTS TOOK...



I REMEMBERED THE TALES. BUT I DID NOT SPEAK. FOR I WAS TAID, THAT CHILD, WAS THE SON OF A CHIEF. AND WHEN I DID NOT SPEAK, FOR I KNEW THAT THE OTHERS WERE REMEMBERING OTHER TALES...

THE GODS WERE MANY, LONG AGO, AND THE GREATEST OF ALL WAS THE GOD HURON. HE WAS THE GOD OF WAR. AND HE CARRIED THE LUNAR ON HIS CHEST...



ALL THIS I KNEW, YET I SPOKE NOT. FOR THE OTHERS WERE NOT WISE. AS I WAS WISE, THEY DID NOT KNOW THAT WE HAD FOUND SOMETHING STRONGER THAN MAGIC...

UP ON YOUR FEET! THE SUN WILL GOON BE BETTER! WE MUST RE-CROSS THE RIVER BEFORE DARK!



WE STARTED BACK. AND I DREAMED. I SAW MEN ONCE AGAIN STRIDING ACROSS THE EARTH LIKE GIANTS. MASTERS, AND IT WAS ALL SO SIMPLE...



WE WILL RAVEL AGAIN...

THERE'D BEEN NO MAGIC! WE'D FOUND A MACHINE. WE HAD ONLY TO MASTER ITS SECRETS. I SAWED THEM. REMEMBERING WHAT THE FOREST HAD TOLD ME SO LONG AGO...

THE DEAD PLACE! THE DEAD PLACE IS FORGOTTEN! THE OLD ONES REPHARED IT WITH THEIR MAGIC! BEWARE, LEST THEIR MAGIC CURSE YOU AS WELL!



NO, THERE'D BEEN NO MAGIC. BUT I HAD NOT KNOWN THAT WHEN I HAD NOT SEEN THE SCORCHED BURNING EVEN WHEN I HAD FOUND OTHERS LIKE MYSELF. YOUNG AND BOLD... I HAD BEEN AFRAID...



WE'D FOLDED OUR RAFT ACROSS THE NIGHTY RIVER TO THE DEAD PLACE AND WE'D GONE HOME, SHAKING IN OUR FEAR...



AND THEN, THE MONSTERS HAD ATTACKED... THE GIANT, MANY-LEGGED MONSTERS...



THE LEGENDS HAD TOLD OF MONSTERS SUCH AS THOSE... MONSTERS FOUND ONLY IN THE DEAD PLACE. THEY'D BEEN CREATED SOMETIME BY THE VERY FIRES THAT HAD MADE THE DEAD PLACE DEAD... THE VERY FIRES OF THE OLD DIED THEMSELVES... TO LIVE WITH THE OTHERS, THEN, IN FEAR... AND SOME OF US HAD DIED...



AND WHEN I'D RETURNED ACROSS THE MIGHTY LIVES, ONLY MY PEOPLE'S FLOOD HAD SHOWN ME FROM THE WILDS OF THE FUTURE, AND OF MY PEOPLE...

BUT MY DREAM HAD BEEN A STRONG DREAM. I HAD NOT FORGOTTEN MY DREAM. THE DEAD PLACE WAS FORGOTTEN TO ME, BUT I'D DREAMED OF GOING BACK, SOMEDAY, AND FINDING THE OLD DAY'S MAGIC.



"FOUR? NO MAN ENTERS THE DEAD PLACE AND LIVES! THE OLD DAYS MADE IT SO! THEY MADE PEOPLE WITH THEIR HANDS, AND THE FIRES CHANGED THE INSECTS TO GODS..."

"FOUR? MY PEOPLE SAY THAT THIS I PROMISE! SO LONG AS I AM CHIEF, NO MORE OF OUR WAR-PEOPLE WILL DIE BECAUSE OF HIS MADNESS!"



I'D WATCHED, AND I'D LEARNED, AND I'D WAITED FOR THE TIME WHEN I COULD LEAD MY PEOPLE TO A BETTER LIFE, TO SEEN THEM HUMAN, PLEASE...

...AND I'D WAITED, DREAMING OF A GLORIOUS NEW DREAMING FOR MEN. AND THEN, ONE DAY, MY WAITING WAS OVER...



"THE CHIEF... IS DEAD!"

I'D WAITED, AND ONE DAY, MY FATHER WAS NO MORE, AND I WAS CHIEF. IT WAS A FINAL RESTING PLACE FOR HIM, AND THEN I'D SPOKEN...



NOW I AM CHIEF! TOMORROW WE CROSS THE RIVER TO THE DEAD PLACE!

NO! WE WILL NOT FOLLOW A CHIEF WHO IS DEAD!

IF THERE AS MAGIC IN THE DEAD PLACE, IT IS STUPID MAGIC! WE KNOW YOUR FATHER'S DREAM, BUT WE WILL NOT DIE FOR IT!



YOU WILL CROSS THE RIVER WITH ME TOMORROW ON THE NEW! THE BRIDGE IS YOURS!

ONE MAN, MADE GOLD, BY THE OTHER, HAD SPOKEN AGAINST ME. THERE'D BEEN NO OTHER WAY.



FOLLOW ME TO THE DEAD PLACE! OR DO I ANSWER? SHALL I BE?

I. I WILL FOLLOW!

IT WAS FOR THEM THAT I'D DREAMED... TO MAKE THEM ONCE MORE GREAT... AND YET, IT HAD BEEN ONLY THEIR FEAR OF ME THAT HAD MADE THEM CHIEF. THE NEXT DAY...



ALARM THE LOOKS SECRETLY! THE CURRENT IS SHIFT!

THEY'D MUTTERED AND KATKO ME, BUT THAT DAY I'D CHOSSEN THE RIGHTY WATERS ONCE AGAIN, AND I'D LEAPED MUCH. THIS TIME, I'D CHOSSEN A FLAT PLACE TO LAND, FAR FROM THE RIVER PLAINS.



FOOT! GO BEFORE US! WATCH WE'LL THE DARK, JUDGE PLACES! FOR IT IS THERE THAT THE MANY-LEGGED MONSTERS' MAKE THEIR CAMP!

THIS TIME, I'D SENT A MAN AHEAD AND THE REST OF US HAD FOLLOWED, AND MY WISDOM HAD MADE THE WAY EASY...



THOSE JUDGE! THE MANY-LEGGED MONSTERS ARE THERE!

THEN WE SHALL GO AROUND THE ROCKS!



FOLLOW ME!



DO NOT BE AFRAID! FEAR STEALS STRAIGHT FROM OUR SOULS! I DO NOT RELEASE YOUR HANDS UNTIL IT COMES GLASSING! WAIT...



NOW!



ALL THAT HAD BEEN A VICTORY? THE WARRIOR'S EYES UPON ME HAD BEEN DIFFERENT THEN, AND HE'D GONE ON...



WE'D GONE ON... AND THERE'D BEEN NOTHING...

ONE DAY... TWO DAYS... THREE DAYS WE'D SEARCHED, AND WE'D FOUND NO MARK! THERE'D BEEN ONLY THE SILENCE OF DEATH! AND THEN, IN THE DARK PLACE AMID THE BURNING, IT'S BEEN THE METALLIC OCEAN...



INCHES TO BEEN MOUNTED IN A SEALED, PROTECTIVE GARMENT... A GARMENT OF METAL, GLEAMING BRIGHT ON THE OUTSIDE AND BLACK WITHIN. I'D DRAWN MY STONE KNIFE AND SLIPPED IT AWAY...



...BUT I'D KNOWN WHAT WE'D FOUND! AND SO I SAID: THERE WAS NO NEED TO LITTON AND LIFT WHAT WE'D FOUND AND CARRY IT OUT... BACK DOWN TO THE MIGHTY RIVER... TO THE RAFT...

WE RETURNED TO THE RAFT, AND I KNEW THAT ONE DAY THE OLD DAYS WOULD RETURN. I HAD ONLY TO LEARN HOW TO MAKE THE ROBOT DO MY BIDDING.

THE OTHERS HAD FALLEN UPON THEIR FACES AND WERE ASLEEP.



ONE DAY, WE WOULD BUILD BEAST, NOT FOR THE HOW SHOULD I TELL THE OTHERS THAT WHAT WE'D FOUND WAS NOT A GOD?



NO! I COULD NOT LET THEM THINK WHAT THEY WOULD! THEY HAD NOT MY BIDDING. THERE WOULD BE TIME ENOUGH LATER TO SPEAK THE TRUTH, WHEN I'D LEARNED TO MASTER THE MACHINE.



TIME ENOUGH, LATER. AFTER I'D FOUND THE MASTERS, I'D UNLOCKED THE SECRETS OF THE MACHINE, AND A NEW AND GLORIOUS DAY HAD DAWNED FOR THE RACE OF MAN.



THE END



# FAILURE

The ship hung a thousand miles above Earth, like a black forecast of doom. But the aliens were in no hurry. First, there was the usual council of war. After all, a space ship, even a giant intergalactic cruiser, could carry only so much fuel, only so much destructive force. It would not do to dissipate either needlessly. Yet, by the same token, the ship's mission was to seek out and destroy any life, on any planet, which might one day challenge the domination of the aliens' home world.

Quietly, leisurely, the war council decided. The planet below showed definite signs of intelligent life. Therefore, it must be destroyed. Ind, the ship's commander, gave the order: "Battle procedure, all beams and destructive devices, full power."

The alien ship dropped. Not swiftly. There was ample time. And from his control screen Ind watched the bluish ball below grow larger, larger...

"Full halt! Hover!" The order snapped from his lips suddenly.

Carefully, Ind studied the foreign object on his screen. It had shot up from the blue ball, trailing fire. Small, sleek, glistening.

"A rocket! Salvage crew will bring it aboard."

It took only moments. The magnetic grapplers drew the rocket close, through an open lock. There was no resistance. Soon, the gleaming needle was before Ind.

"Life energy within, sir." That was one of the techs.

A power torch cut through the rocket's metal—and then it happened.

Pandemonium. The earth creatures leaped through the opening. For a split second they stood, staring at their captors. By comparison with the aliens they were tiny—and in their eyes was none of the cold, inhuman intelligence which marked the aliens. In their eyes was—idiotcy, nothingness. In their eyes was terror, no more. A terror which made them leap from where they stood, to beat against the alien ship's walls, to slam against crewmen, screaming and chattering, unreasoning.

"Cut them down." Ind had seen enough. These were not creatures to fear. These earth creatures were not reasoning beings, despite their rocket, despite their technology.

A beam lanced out, charred the earth creatures into nothingness.

Ind turned to his second in command. "Battle orders rescinded. We have nothing to do here. We go on."

The alien ship moved, gathered speed—and vanished. So swiftly that in seconds it was light years distant. It would never return...

- - -

Doctor Steven Crane, deep within the bowels of his concrete bunker at White Sands took his eyes from the instruments before him and turned to his assistant: "No signal, Andy. Nothing. The rocket must have disintegrated in space. I guess—we've failed."

Experimental Rocket C8—failure. That was how the record would note it. A pity. Crane had had high hopes. Yet he could still think of the rocket's passengers. "Too bad," he sighed. "Poor little monkeys. It seems a shame that they had to die—for nothing."

# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Williamson

THE SHIP CAME OUT OF THE BLACK NIGHT, SPITTING FIRE... AND GRACK KNEW AN EAGERNESS ALMOST UNSHARABLE WITH INTENSITY. THE PLANET RESTLED AND WAITED. IT HAD WAITED SO LONG. BUT NOW THE WAITING WAS OVER. FARTY WERE RETURNING! THEY MOOL WITHIN THE ALLOT BOWELS OF THE POCKET. THEY WERE COMING BACK, AT LAST! MEN!

THE POCKET SPUNNED PLANE SETTLED. IN HIS BARRAGESS, GRACK SENT HIS MIND QUESTING THROUGH ITS METAL. YES! THE MEN WERE THERE...

WHEN? I'VE BEEN ALL KINGS, CAPTAIN, BUT OLD BROTHER MATTER, REALLY OUTING HERE!

STRANGE PLANTS  
STRANGE LIFE FORMS  
YOU'RE A BROADCAST  
MARCH! YOU KNOW  
FARTY?



IT'S BEEN FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS SINCE EARTH'S BIOLOGICAL TEAMS REJOINED THIS PLANET. PLenty OF THE FOR STIMULATED MOUNTAIN. HOW LONG DO YOU THINK OUR JOB WILL TAKE?



A FEW DAYS. I DON'T THINK IT WILL TAKE LONGER THAN THAT TO OVERHAUL IF THE PLANET IS READY FOR COLONIZATION. BUT FROM WHAT I CAN SEE, I HAVE MY DOUBTS.



PERSONALLY, I'VE GOT A FEELING THIS PLANET IS GOING TO BE A BUST AS FAR AS COLONISTS ARE CONCERNED.

THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN. EARTH NEEDS COLONISTS. THAT'S WHY THE WASTE PLANETS WERE CHOSEN. THE HERO HAS ANTICIPATED SO LET'S HOPE YOU'RE WRONG, MASON. I'M TURNING IN.



GRICK FROD...AND THEN THERE WAS NOTHING. THE MEN SLEPT, BUT GRICK HAD HEARD SOMETHING THE THOUGHT WAS A REAL SPECT. MEN MUST COME! THEY MUST! ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT, HE SAW THE OVERM...



IT HAD BEEN FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS SINCE EARTH'S BIOLOGICAL TEAMS REJOINED THIS PLANET. PLenty OF THE FOR STIMULATED MOUNTAIN. HOW LONG DO YOU THINK OUR JOB WILL TAKE?



THEN THE SHIP HAD COME, THE OTHER SHIP... LONG AGO. IT HAD LEFT BEHIND A GIFT OF SPICES AND SPICES AND CHEMICALS. THE SHIP HAD LEFT BEHIND THE GIFT OF LIFE...



THE SHIP HAD COME AND LONG... AND LIFE HAD TAKEN HOLD... ON THIS DEAD, STERILE PLANET...



SLOWLY AT FIRST... A TINY SHOOT... A MICROSCOPIC ANIMAL... THEN, AS TIME CREEPT BY...



YES... MAN HAD BROUGHT LIFE... AND MAN'S SCIENCE HAD INVENTED THAT LIFE SO THAT IT CHANGED, EVOLVED... SWIFTLY...



FOR HALF A THOUSAND CENTURIES THE PLANET HAD FLOURED... AND THEN... AND NOW, MAN HAD RETURNED...

WE'LL SPLIT INTO TWO PARTIES AS USUAL. YOU ALL KNOW WHAT WE WANT. SAMPLES OF ANIMAL LIFE FORMS, PARTICULARLY ADVANCED ANIMAL LIFE.

I DON'T THINK WE'LL FIND MUCH CAPTAIN. LOOK THERE!



THOSE BONES PROVE THAT THERE ARE MEAT EATERS HERE, AND NONE OF THE INTELLIGENT RACE! EAT MEAT ANY LONGER. NOT EVEN MAN!

STILL, MAN DID EAT MEAT ONCE, MASON! AND MAN WAS INTELLIGENT! SO WHO KNOWS LET'S GO!



GRACE REACHED THE THOUGHT'S READING OUT COME NEARBY! LET ME KNOW THE READER IS GOING! BUT THE MEN DO NOT COME NEAR...

THE MEN DID NOT COME NEAR, AND SHOCK THRILLED WITH DISAPPOINTMENT. ALL HIS THOUGHTS WERE OF THEM IN THE LONG DAYS AFTER.

IT WAS GOOD TO HAVE THEM NEAR AGAIN AT LAST. ON THE THIRD DAY THEY RETURNED. BUT SHOCK DID NOT UNDERSTAND...



AND FROM OUR SURVEY, WE KNOW THAT CONDITIONS ARE EXACTLY SIMILAR ALL OVER THIS PLANET. I WAS RIGHT. MAN COULD NEVER THRIVE HERE!

NO, I SUPPOSE NOT! UNDER STIMULATED CONDITIONS THESE ANIMALS HAVE DEVELOPED A MILLION PLANS OF EVOLUTION IN FIFTY THOUSAND, AND THEY... *SHOCK!*



EXACTLY! SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, THEIR EVOLUTION TOOK A WRONG TURNING. YOU SAW THE HORROR! NO FEELINGS, NO WITS! EVEN THE ANIMALS SEEM TO AVOID IT!

I NOTICED THAT THEY'RE ONLY SEEN IN THE DARK, YET THE POWERS PROVE THAT THEY ENTERED THE FOREST *ONCE!*



THAT MIGHT BE A GLIMPSE! ANY THOUGHTS, SHOCK? THIS IS YOUR LINE. WHY DOES A ANIMAL'S LIFEFORM TO APPROX THE FOREST'S HORROROUS SOIL TRANSMISSION?

COULD, CAPTAIN. THE SOIL IS DEAD AND THERE IS NO... *SHOCK!* I CAN SAY IS THAT IF ANIMALS CAN EVOLVE INTO THINGS LIKE THESE, THEN... THE SAME THING COULD HAPPEN TO MAN.

NOTHING MORE, WE'VE STUDIED!

STUPID! IT WOULD BE DANGEROUS TO BRING COLONISTS HERE! LOOK AT THE PLACE! THE ONLY WAY IT WILL EVER BE FIT FOR COLONIZATION IS IF IT'S RUINED CLEAN AND WE... *SHOCK!* ALL OVER AGAIN!

I'M AFRAID THAT'S ABOUT WHAT WE'LL HAVE TO DO, MARCH! FIFTY THOUSAND YEARS... *SHOCK!* WELL, A LITTLE.



NO! CRACK ALMOST SQUEAKED THE WORD, BUT THE MEN WOULD NOT HAVE HEARD, EVEN IF HE SAID. THEIR HEARS WERE... DIFFERENT...

STILL, THERE SEEMED TO BE SOMETHING. EARTH NEEDS ROOM FOR HER GROWING POPULATION. WELL, USE THIS SPOT AS A BASE OF OPERATIONS...



IN THE MORNING WE WERE OPERATING 2000-0077 AND SMALL 1000?



MAN HAS GONE... AND NOW MAN WAS GOING TO DESTROY! BUT THE MEN WERE WORRY? THERE WAS INTELLIGENT LIFE HERE? THERE WAS? ONLY HOW COULD CRACK MAKE THE MEN UNDERSTAND?



HOW COULD CRACK TELL THEM, EVEN IF THERE WAS A MEANS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THEM, WITHOUT DESTROYING HIMSELF?



THERE WAS NO WAY... AND NO CRACK SAW, THAT NEXT MORNING...



BRUCE SAW THE LANCES OF FLAME, THE  
PIRES FLOODING AND LEAPED AND DIED, AND  
BEHIND, THE FIRES LEFT HAVE MOON BARKEN-  
BESS...



DAY BY DAY, WHILE MY WIFE  
THE PLANET DIED, AND BRUCE  
COULD ONLY WATCH. BRUCE  
COULD ONLY WAIT AND HOPE...



BRUCE WAITED... AND  
YEARNED, AND THE  
PLANET'S DEATH MOVED  
CLOSER... BUT IN THE END,  
THE WAITING WAS NOT IN  
VAIN...

WELL, I ALMOST WERE  
ABOUT TO GIVE UP, AREN'T  
WE, BOB?

JUST ABOUT! WE'LL  
BURN OUT THIS LAST  
PATCH TOMORROW, THEN  
WE'LL BE DEAD. AND I  
CAN'T SAY I'M SORRY!



WELL, ENIT  
IT?

WELL... AND DIS-  
TRESSING. SOMEHOW  
I ALMOST FEEL AS  
IF THE PLANET KNOWS  
IT'S BEEN KILLED...



EVERY NOW AND THEN, I GET A... WELL,  
CALL IT AN EMPATHY! IT'S AS IF  
SOME THING... SOMEONE... WERE  
REACHING INTO MY MIND...

IF YOU'RE EXPECTING THAT THERE'S  
AN INTELLIGENCE HERE, WHICH WE'RE  
OVERLOOKING, JUST TAKE A GOOD  
LOOK AT YOUR OWNED PLANT,  
A FEW FEET LONG, THAT  
ALL THIS PLACE HAS MANAGED  
TO PRODUCE!

YOU NEED A SHOWER, MASON? WE  
ALL DO! WHY DON'T WE SLEEP OUT  
IN THE DARK TONIGHT? AFTER  
THE JORDAN AIR WE'LL WASH THE  
DUSTY OUT OF OUR MINDS.

ON THIS PLANET,  
MASON?



GRIND SHOWERED. IT WAS TOO  
LATE TO WISH FOR. SPOCK HAD  
MISSED HIS MARK... FOR SO LONG.  
AFTERWARD, HIS WISH CAME TRUE...

BLASTED IMP'S USELESS  
PLANET? IT'S THE  
CRUEST!



AFTERWARD, SPOCK COULD HEAR THE WORDS AND NOT  
CARE. HE COULD FORGET THE FLAMES AND THE BURNING.  
EVEN WHEN THE CAPTAIN HIMSELF MUTTERED IN HIS  
SLEEP...

...NO... INTELLIGENT LIFE...  
NOTHING THAT... THINK... BURN  
IT... BURN IT ALL... START OVER...



LATER, SPOCK WOULD  
SLEEP. BECAUSE THERE  
WOULD BE NO MORE NEED.  
AFTER TONIGHT, NOT FOR  
A LONG, LONG TIME.  
BUT THAT DID NOT MAT-  
TER NOW.



FOR NOW, SPOCK LET HIS DREAMS GO... SILENT...



MAN HAD RETURNED, AT LAST, AND SPOCK WAS CON-  
TENT. IT HAD BEEN SO LONG SINCE ANY ANIMAL HAD  
VENTURED NEAR HIM...





THE MEN STILL WERE... CALLED OUT, FROM THE SHIP, A  
SLEETTY VOICE ANSWERED. A FIGURE APPEARED IN THE  
FOOTLIGHT IN HAND...

W-WHAT DOES GO ON OUT  
HERE? CAN'T A GUY  
GET SOME ANSWERS?  
WHAT THE...FF

THE TREE ROAST THE  
TREE'S ALIVE! SHOOT!  
SHOOT...



GROCK'S CAP HAN... HIS VOICE DROPPED, STRING-LIKE  
HIS LEAVES CUPLED, AND DARKNESS BEGAN TO GUMMERS  
PERCEPTIVE SENSES. VAGUELY, HE COULD HEAR THE MEN...  
SENSE THEIR VOICES, FADING...

THERE WAS YOUR  
INTELLIGENT LIFE  
CAPTAIN THAT TREE?

INTELLIGENT? HOW CAN  
YOU SAY THAT, MASON? IS A  
POOR POO-YOOP? INTELLI-  
GENT? CAN IT THINK? CAN IT  
FEEL? CAN IT REPORT?



GROCK DIED. HIS LEAVES DROPPED LIKE PAPER BITS TORN  
BY CHILDREN AND FLOODED TO THE WIND. CHILDREN WHO  
COULD NOT UNDERSTAND, BECAUSE IT WAS BEYOND THEIR  
LIMITED IMAGINATION.

ALL RIGHT LET'S GET SCREW! IT'S ALMOST DAWN.  
ANYWAY, MASH SAYS THAT LAST PATCH, INCLUDING  
MASON'S INTELLIGENT TREE? WE'VE GOT TO BEGIN  
OUR WAY!



GROCK, SHOOTING, DROPPING THE WICK, AS THE STREAM OF  
DESTRUCTIVE ENERGY FROM HIS... WEAPON DISINTEGRATED  
HIS THINK... HIS PEEPER-ROCK...



GROCK WITHDREW. HIS FINGER PEELED. THEIR VOICES  
WERE ONLY WHISPERS NOW...

CAN YOU SAY A "VENUS FLY-TRAP"  
CAN'T FEEL... CAN'T FEEL...  
CAN'T REASON, CAPTAIN?

INTELLIGENT? WHO EVER HEARD  
OF AN INTELLI-  
GENT TREE?



LATELY, THE SHIP RODE INTO THE MORNING LIGHT,  
SEEING IT THE PLANET LAY BLACK AND SCORCHED AND  
STERILE. THE CAPTAIN TURNED TO MASON...

IF THAT TREE WAS SO INTELLIGENT,  
MASON, WHY COULDN'T IT COMMUNICATE  
WITH US?

PERHAPS IT  
THINKS CAPTAIN  
MASON'S  
MAYBE IT'S  
BETTER TO  
NEAR IT?



THE  
END.

# THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

GURT WAS PLEASED. THE DESTRUCTION HIS SHIPS HAD wrought WAS ALMOST ABSOLUTE. THERE WAS A BITTER TASTE, ONE MORE LINK IN THE CHAIN OF CONQUESTS THE FLEET HAD FORGED ACROSS A DOZEN SOLAR SYSTEMS SINCE LEAVING EARTH. ITS HOME PLANET, NOW, THE COLONISTS FROM WHENCE IT COULD COME AND SETTLE, UNFOUNDED. BUT THAT WAS NOT GURT'S AFFAIR. GURT WAS A SOLDIER. HIS INTERESTS WERE IN TACTICS... WEAPONS...



THESE LITTLE WENT BACK TO HIS OBSERVATION OF THE SUMMER MARTIAN CITY. BUT... BLAST THAT ANGEL! THE MONTH'S PLEASURE WAS SPOLIED NOW! IT HAD BEEN LIKE THIS JUST BEFORE THE ATTACK ON MARS, TOO! ANGEL... AND HIS FUGITIVE...

YES... JUST BEFORE THE ATTACK ON MARS, WHEN THE FLEET'S SCOUT SHIP HAD RETURNED WITH ITS OBSERVATION REPORTS... ANGEL HAD BEEN FLEEGMATIC AS USUAL...



NO RESPONSE. VIOLENCE. PRACTICALLY UNKNOWN. THEIR FEAR... SHOULD BE EXTREMELY HIGH. ALMOST UNLIMITED. EXCELLENT! EXCELLENT!

NO RESPONSE? BUT THE REPORT ALSO STATED THAT MARTIAN WERE AN ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY. ALMOST AS FAR ADVANCED AS OURS?



IF THEY FIGHT?

THEY WILL NOT FIGHT.



BUT IF THEY DO...?

THEY WILL NOT! THEY WILL FEAR! THEY WILL NOT LET THEM FIGHT! YOU FORGET YOURSELF, ANGEL! I AM IN COMMAND HERE! I DECIDE WHICH OBJECTIVE WE CAN TAKE AND WHICH OBJECTIVE WE CANNOT! AND I SAY...



WE ATTACK!



GURT COULD SMILE NOW, GRIMLY, REMEMBERING HOW THE ATTACK HAD PROGRESSED. YES, HE'D BEEN RIGHT! HIS DECISION HAD BEEN CORRECT...

WHEN THE TWENTH INVASION FLEET HAD SET DOWN, THERE'D BEEN NO RESISTANCE. THE TERRIFIED MARTIANS HAD CONQUERED AND SURRENDERED. THEIR FIVE ALLIES WITH THE PLAN GURT HAD PREDICTED WOULD BE THERE...



AND, AS IT HAD BEEN WITH MARS, SO WOULD IT BE WITH THE FLEET'S NEXT OBJECTIVE! GURT SMOKED HIS HEAD. ANGEL WAS A FOOL, A FLEEGMATIC FOOL...



OUR WORK IS DONE HERE! ANGEL, YOU WILL ARRANGE FOR THE LOCAL OCCUPATION FORCES TO REMAIN UNTIL THE SOLDIERS ARRIVE! THEN, BEGIN WE BOARD THE FLEETSHIP! WE BLAST OFF WITHIN THE HOUR!

AND YET, LATER, CAUNT COULD NOT HELP WONDERING THE NEXT PLANET. THIS... EARTH. ITS PEOPLE WERE NOT LIKE THE OTHERS. NEMETH'S PLAN OF CONQUEST HAD BEEN FORMULATED 8000 AGO. THIS... EARTH... HAD BEEN UNDER OBSERVATION FOR A LONG TIME. AND THE REPORTS HAD BEEN... DISTURBING...



COMMUNICATIONS REPORTS OBSERVATION SHIP MAKING HENGE-VOLAR, SH-1

SO, GREAT BOOBY HAVE A COUPLING SPIN STAND BY AT THE AIR- LOCK!



THE OBSERVATION SHIP WHIRLED UPWARD TOWARD THE PLANET, LIKE A SILVER WHEEL. CAUNT WATCHED IT ON THE VIEWER UNIT, HEARD THE LOCK WHERE THE SPACE-SUITED COUPLING CREW WAITED...



COMPLING THE TWO SHIP, AIR LOCK HAS A SIMPLE MANDOR-RE. MOMENTS LATER, THE BOOBY WAS IN CAUNT'S COASTERS. CLUMBY IN THE SHIP HAD NECESSARY AT THE FACT THAT THE SMALLER SHIP GAINED NO PRESSURED ATMOSPHERE...



... WEAPONS! ATOMIC, HYDROGEN... HYDROGEN?

YES, SIR! ADDITIONAL NUCLEAR EX PLOSIONS OBSERVED SINCE FIRST SPACED SHIP! ANALYSIS... CHAIN REACTION, HYDROGEN INDICATE!

VERY WELL! WE ARE NOW OVER THIS LAND MIGHT YOU WILL LAND... HERE... AND MAKE THE LEGAL, POST-WAR OBSERVATIONS. IT IS OPEN TERRAIN...

BUT IF I MAY MAKE A SUGGESTION?



CAUNT SMILED IN AMBIVANCE, MOODS AGAIN...



WHAT IS IT?

THESE EARLY LINES OF ALL THE PLANES WE ARE ENCOUNTERING, THEY ARE THE ONLY ONES... BEARING BARRELS... AND HAVE ATTAINED NOOLEAN POWER!

NOW, THEY TOY WITH CRIMINAL SPACE-TRAVEL SUPERHEROES! PERHAPS THIS IS A TASK FOR SOMEONE BETTER FITTED FOR A BOOBY! LET ME SEE I HAVE A SUGGESTION...



PRECONDITIONS ARE FOR POWER, NOT BELIEFS! WITH US SETTLING TO NEMETH, PERHAPS IT WOULD BE BEST IF YOU JUST SOME TIME WITH THE PLEURO-TRONIC!



GURT MADE A MOMENT. THEN

IN THE MEANTIME, A LEADER MUST BE COMFORTED AND SO TO LEAST IT IS THAT I DISCOVERED IF YOU ARE AFRAID FOR YOUR HIGH POSITION, AND IF HE WILL APPROVE.



IN THIS CASE, POSSIBLY PERSONAL OBSERVATION WOULD BE BEST, BUT GURT COULD NOT ADMIT THAT, EVEN TO HIMSELF. GOOD, HE AND HIS SECOND IN COMMAND WERE READY.



AND MOMENTS LATER, THE SCOUT SHIP UNCOUPLED FROM THE PLATFORM AND WHIRLED AWAY TOWARD EARTH.



ON THE WAY DOWN, GURT INTRINSICALLY OBTAINED HIMSELF WITH THE SON-LATOR, THE DEVICE WHICH WOULD IMPLANT A KNOWLEDGE OF EARTH'S MAJOR LANGUAGE IN HIS BRAIN AUTOMATICALLY, WITHIN MOMENTS, THEN.



THERE WAS A BUTTON BESIDE THE DOOR TO THE STRUCTURE, A SON-ALLING DEVICE, NO DOUBT. GURT PRESSED IT. THE REACTION OF THE FEMALE WHO OWNED THE DOOR IN RESPONSE TO THE TULL WAS MOST STARTLING.



THERE IS A STRUCTURE OF SOME SORT? IT STANDS ALONE IN THIS OPEN TERRAIN.



GOOD! AN EXCELLENT BIT OF LUCK! WE CAN TEST THE MIND-TANTS WITHOUT BEING INTERRUPTED. IT WILL BE A GOOD SAMPLING OF WHAT TO EXPECT! COME...

IT WAS ALL THERE, SHOCK, CONSTERNATION, SURPRISE, BUT ONLY FOR A MOMENT. SHE STARED FAST GURT... AT ANOOL... AND HER EXPRESSION CHANGED...



IT WAS INCREDIBLE, BUT SHIVERED, ALMOST THE WOMAN WAS... PURSUED BECAUSE OF THE ODD BLOSSOMS AT ANDREW'S FEET! AND THE FEAT! THE FEAT WAS DONE...



THE IDEA... COMING FIVE TIME OF NIGHT! DISAPPEARING ME! INTERESTING MY FAVORITE RADIO PROGRAM...

WE... WE ARE SURE? MAY WE SPEAK TO YOU? WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY!



WELL, IF SURE? YOU THINK I KNOW THAT? COME IN! COME IN! LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!

W-Y-E-T OF COURSE? TH-THANK YOU!

THEY FOLLOWED HER INSIDE THE STRUCTURE, CAUTIOUSLY, THEIR HANDS ON THEIR SWORDS...



YOU ARE ALREADY?

MY HUSBAND'S IN TOWN! HE DROVE IN TO PICK UP SOME BIRD, BUT ANY BUSINESS YOU HAVE WITH ME, I CAN HANDLE!

THE WOMAN STOOD WITH ARMS FOLDED, DEFIANT, ANNOYED, STUDING THEM AS THOUGH SHE HELD THEM IN CONTEMPT...



NOW, JUST WHAT IS IT YOU WANT? COULDN'T YOU HAVE COME IN THE DAYTIME? YOU WON'T SEE MUCH THIS TIME OF NIGHT!

YOU KNOW WHY WE ARE HERE? THAT WE'VE COME TO OBSERVE?



WELL, IF SURE? WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU! BUT FRANKLY MY MIND? YOU HAVEN'T MADE A GOOD START, I CAN TELL YOU THAT!

THIS FEMALE? IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE! SHE WAS NOT AFRAID, ONLY FIERCE, AND HER EYES GLINTED WITH A KNOWING INTELLIGENCE...



YOU YOU DO NOT FEAR OUR COMING?

WHY SHOULD I? YOU WON'T DO ANY DAMAGE? WE'VE BEEN TO THAT!



SEEN TO IT? OF COURSE! THE DISTURBANCE WILL BEON HAND WHEN THE BIRD OF YOUR MOVE IN! YOU WON'T BE DISTURBED! BUT YOU'LL BE WATCHED! SECRETLY!

SO THAT WAS IT? A THREAT? COULDN'T BELIEVE IT, BUT THERE IT WAS! HE ASKED NO MORE QUESTIONS...



ANDREW BACK TO THE SHIP! SURELY WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME!

PANG CAME LIKE A WAVE, WASHING OVER HIM, DROWNING OUT REASON IN ITS CLIPPING, CHOKING THROAT OF TERROR...



NOW WHAT? COME BACK HERE! I... LOSE MY! MY ROSES!

FEAR GAME...



FEAR GAME AND DROVE A SPINNING WHEEL BACK TO A FLASHB...  
...ING WHEEL BACK TO A FLASHB...



FEAR GAME AND DROVE AN IMAGIN...  
...FLEET BACK INTO THE NIGHT VOID  
FROM WHICH IT HAD COME...



AND ON EARTH, A SHOWER IN A  
MIDDLE-CLASS TOWN, RETURNING FROM  
TOWN, LOOKED UP AND MARVELLED  
AT THE STARS...



"CRAFT PEOPLE? JUST LOOK  
AT MY PROPORTIONS! THE  
MARRIED SOME PEOPLE  
HAVE! REMIND!"



AND YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN THE SET-  
...UP! THAT WOULD BE THE SPACE-BOOTS  
...LIKE OUT OF THE JUNKYARD CANNON?  
YOU'RE THINK THEY WOULD GO TO  
START SHOOTING RIGHT OFF?



YOU KNOW SOMETHING, HENRY? EVEN IF THE  
DAY IS GOOD, I'M ALMOST SURE YOU WOULD  
LET THAT HOLLYWOOD STUFF AND SON  
FARM TO SHOOT FROM BUREAU - FICTION  
MOVIE? IF THERE TWO ARE ANY EXAMPLE  
OF THE KIND OF POLICE WE CAN EXPECT TO  
BE ROAMING AROUND HERE...



GERT SAT IN HIS FLASHER, SMILING HIS HEAD AS THE FLEET  
STRADDLED HOME, AND THE FIFTY OF IT WAS THE NEVER-KNOW-ABOUT  
HENRY? GERT'S DEAL? ON THAT RED BACK HIS POINT? GERT  
HAD BEEN RIGHT? PLAN IS... THE ULTIMATE WEAPON?



# MARKED MAN

THE COURT-MARTIAL ADJUTANT GIVES YOU YOUR REWARD FOR TWENTY YEARS OF SELFLESS DEVOTION TO DUTY IN A FEW TERSE, CRISP PHRASES... AND THE WARDEN STRIKES YOU WITH THE IMPACT OF A PHYSICAL BLOW. YOU'VE LIVED BY AN IRON CODE OF SELF-DISCIPLINE, BUILT UP OVER HALF A LIFETIME IN THE HARSH, DANGEROUS HARD EMPLOYERS OF DEEP SPACE. YET, EVEN SO, IT IS DIFFICULT TO KEEP YOUR FACE CALM, IMMOVABLE. YOU HAD EXPECTED SOME OF THIS. POSSIBLY EVEN IN THE OLD DAYS OF THE... OF THE...



THE DECISION YOU HAVE JUST HEARD IS NOT THE DECISION OF THIS COURT. IT COMES DIRECTLY FROM THE PARLIAMENT, AND TAKES EFFECT WITHIN FIVE MINUTES. UNTIL THEN, YOU ARE FREE TO MAKE FINAL ARRANGEMENTS.

YOU SALUTE, TURN ON YOUR HEEL, AND LEAVE. AN ESCORT OF TWO ARMED GUARDS FALLS IN BEHIND YOU AS YOU MAKE YOUR WAY BACK TO THE SHIP. WARDEN IS WAITING.



HELLO, WARDEN. IT SEEMS THE ADJUTANT WILL BE UNDER YOUR COMMAND FROM NOW ON!

I... JUST THEN THE COURT REACHED A VERDICT...

ALL RIGHT. YOU MEN CAN REMAIN HERE! I WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CAPTAIN! THERE'S NO NEED FOR YOU TO BE WITH HIM WHEN HE PACKS!

THANKS, WARDEN. BUT I'M AFRAID THAT FROM NOW ON, WHEN I GO... PREP GO!





THE SHARMS ESCORT YOU TO YOUR QUARTERS AND THEN STAND STIFFLY OUTSIDE, WAITING. BUT YOU DO NOT PACK. YOU LOOK AROUND AT THE ALLOY WALLS OF THE STAY-PORE. YOU STAND SILENTLY. REMEMBER...



THERE'D BEEN NO APLAUSE... NO CHEERS. NOT FOR YOU! EVEN THEN, IT HAD BEEN THE SAME! ALWAYS, YOU HAD BEEN DIFFERENT! STRONG, DEDICATED... LIVING ONLY FOR THE DAY WHEN YOU WENT INTO SPACE AT LAST...



...OR WERE CERTAIN THAT SUCH AN INCIDENT DOES NOT HAPPEN AGAIN? THOSE WERE YOUR ORDERS. AND THE VESUGIAN NATIVES HAD LEFT YOU NO CHOICE...



YOU REMEMBER HOW IT ALL BEGAN... GRADUATION EXERCISES AT THE SPACE ACADEMY.

CADET LIEUTENANT REEL GRANT... HONOR MEN... CLASS OF '88...



SIT? I'VE ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD THAT A SHIP IS A COMMITMENT SHIP!

SO IT MAY BE, LIEUTENANT! BUT A SHIP CAN BE BUILT TO THE BREAK-TWO POINTS! THIS IS THE SHIP! THIS IS THE SHIP!

THAT FIRST SPACE CRUISE... IT HADN'T BEEN PLEASANT! YOU HADN'T BEEN POPULAR. BUT YOU WERE ACCUSED TOOTHY. AND IN THREE YEARS YOU'D BEEN GIVEN THE COMMAND OF A LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER.



BACK TO THE SHIP? SURELY?



NOT THE VENUSIAN ADVENTURERS HAD LEFT YOU NO CHOICE. SPACE TRAVEL HAD STILL BEEN IN ITS INFANCY THEN, AND EARTHMAN COULD BE SAFE IN THE SYSTEM'S FAR FLUNG WICK WORLDS ONLY IF THEY WERE RESPECTED AND FEARED.

TAKE HER ON, LIEUTENANT! I WANT THAT CITY OF TREARS BLASTED TO ATOM!



THE CITY? BUT SIR, THAT'S WHERE THEY'RE HOLDING THEIR PRISONERS!



I DON'T LIKE IT ANY MORE THAN YOU DO, LIEUTENANT. BUT I'VE GOT TO DO MY JOB! TAKE HER OFF!

THE CREW HAD MURDERED, NOT UNDERSTANDING, BUT YOU'D HAD YOUR ORDERS.



YOU LEFT NOTHING LIVING BEHIND YOU, AND FROM THAT DAY ON, NO-ONE EARTHMAN WOULD BE SAFE ON VENUS. BUT YOUR CREW HAD NOT SEEN IT THAT WAY. AFTERWARD, BEHIND...



IM PUTTING FOR A TRAMP.

THAT DAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, YOU'D WONDERED IF THE CODE YOU'D CHOSEN FOR YOURSELF WAS TOO HARSH. TOO UNCOMPROMISING.



BUT, NO! SPACE WAS NOT A PLACE FOR BROTHERS! YOU'D DONE ONE, AND YOUR REPUTATION HAD BROUGHT YOU EVERY UNWANTED, YOUNG, DARTY ASSIGNMENT IN THE BOOK.

AS OF TODAY, THIS WILL BE IN COMMAND OF SUPERVENIENT ROBERT. I-EE! YOU KNOW WHAT WE WANT, COMMANDER?



YES, SIR! FULL DETAILS ON PERFORMANCE, STRENGTH, MAXIMUM RANGE AND EFFECTS OF LIMITED SET-UP ON THE EFFICIENCY OF MEAT.

YOU'D TAKEN THE X-37 BUT, THREE MONTHS IN DEEP SPACE, FAR BEYOND THE LIMITS MAN HAD YET REACHED.



FEN-NO?

SIR, CAN'T BE FOR NAME ON THEM! THE MINE ARE AS PLANT AS SHIP? IT'S BEEN A LONG DRIVE! AND...

THE CRUISE HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN! AND I WILL HAVE MY SHIPBOARD BY SHIP! EACH OF THESE MEN WILL SERVE FOURTEEN DAYS IN THE SHIP!

HOW THEY'D HATED YOU, BUT YOU'D DONE WHAT YOU'D BEEN ORDERED TO DO. YOU'D GASPED WITH THE OTHERS WHEN YOUR OXYGEN SUPPLIES BEGAN TO PETER OUT.

OH, YOUR FEET? WE STILL HAVE A RESERVE TO WAR!

YOU'D GASPED, AND YOU'D BROUGHT YOUR SHIP HOME, AND THE MEN HAD SPILLED THE WORD. THE REPORTERS HAD COME FLOCKING.

I UNDERSTAND YOU LOSE TWO MEN, COMMANDER! ISN'T THAT A HEAVY PRICE TO PAY JUST TO TEST THE EFFICIENCY OF A NEW SHIP?

IT COULDN'T BE HELPED. I HAD MY OWN PLAN. MAN'S DESTINY LIES IN THE STARS!

MAN'S DESTINY ON PEOPLE'S COMMAND. IT MEANS IT CAN BE A MAN TO GREAT LENGTHS!

I HAVE NO OBJECTION EXCEPT TO SAY: SHIP! GOOD DAY, GENTLEMEN!

YOU MEANT THAT? FROM THE HEART, BUT THE WOMEN HAD THOUGHT OTHERWISE.

AND IT SEEMS TO THIS REPORTER THAT NO MAN SHOULD BE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO SACRIFICE WOMAN LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF PERSONAL GLORY...

THE FOOLS! OH, THE FOOLS! YOU'D DONE YOUR BEST, AND THEY'D TORN YOU TO BITS! IT WASN'T WORSE IF AT ALL, FOR YOU HAD TO BELIEVE THAT! AND THEN THE SHIP'S FROM BEYOND PLUTO HAD STRUCK...

THE SHIP'S HAD STRUCK... AND YOU'D LEARNED AT LAST WHY YOU'D BEEN ORDERED TO TEST THE X-37...

WE'VE KNOWN FOR SOME TIME THAT THIS ATTACK WAS COMING. COMMANDER SHIRT! THEY'RE FROM GALEX & COULD STAY BEYOND PLUTO! WE NEEDED SHIPS THAT COULD STAY BASED... AT THEIR HOME BASES!

AND SO, AS THE ONLY MAN WHO'D EVER TAKEN A SHIP THAT FAN INTO SPACE, YOU'D LED THE METALIZATION FLEET TO JARON... A REMOVED SHIPS... AND FIVE THOUSAND MEN WHO HATED YOUR INSIDES.



THEY'D MADE YOU A CAPTAIN FOR THAT AND YOU'D FALLEN BACK INTO OBSCURITY THE WAR HAD DONE ON YOU. YOU'D FORGOTTEN AND THEN, THERE'D BEEN THAT FATAL DAY.

IN THE END, YOU'D BECOME NOTHING MORE THAN A BLOOMING CHAUFFEUR. THE GRAND ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET HAD CHOSEN YOUR SHIP... TO CARRY HIM ON AN INSPIRATION TOUR.

TWENTY YEARS... AND THAT HAD BEEN YOUR REWARD. NOW IT HAD UNRAVELLED. NOW THE CONTENTS HAD STRIPPED YOU FROM TEN THOUSAND FEET ON A QUEEN OUTPOST SOCKET FIELD.



YOU... AN AID? ON THAT FLIGHT BACK TO EARTH, WHEN THE ENEMY HAD SUDDENLY APPEARED, YOU'D ALMOST WISHED THE SCANNER HADN'T PICKED THEM UP. BETTER A QUICK DEATH THAN WHAT YOU HAD.

THE ADMIRAL HAD CHOSEN YOU TO FAN... BUT THE ENEMY HAD BEEN FAST... TOO FAST.

WHAT ARE THE ADMIRAL'S ORDERS?

IF WE FIGHT, WE MIGHT DESTROY ONE OF THEM... POSSIBLY TWO! BUT THE LOSS ARE TOO GREAT! WE'VE GOT TO TRY TO DEFEND THEM, CAPTAIN GRANT!

THEY'RE STILL COMING? WE MIGHT LOSE THEM IF WE SIT DOWN IN THAT ASTEROID. BUT IT'S WORTH A TRY!

IT MIGHT ALSO BE SUCCESS, CAPTAIN! THESE 'INVASORS' OF ROCK ARE LIKE MULES! BUT... VERY WELL! WE'LL TRY IT!



IT HAD BEEN A DANGEROUS PLAN - A DELICATE GAME - NERVEY, BUT YOU WERE USED TO THAT KIND OF GAMES - SURE, YOU WERE A SPACK-MAN, DIAMOND HAND.

YOU'D BLESSED THEM, THEY'D SHOT AWAY INTO INFINITY, SEARCHING FOR YOU, AND THE STARFORD? HE HUNG HOME... TO EARTH. AND THEN, ONE WEEK OUT, IT'D HAPPENED.



SUDDENLY, THE ADMIRAL HAD FAINTED. HE'D BEGUN TO GASP. HIS SKIN GREY-ISH.

THE STARFORD'S MEDICAL OFFICER HAD BEEN BLUNT.

SO FAR, NEITHER OF YOU SHOW ANY SIGN OF IT. THE ADMIRAL SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THE ONLY ONE INFECTED? BUT IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME, I'M SORRY, TILL WE ALL...

CAN YOU SHARE IT?

HE'S BEARING IT. IT'S SOME SORT OF MIND-CONTAMINATING DISEASE? HE SEEMED TO HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO RESISTANCE TO IT!

AND THERE'S A CHANCE WE'LL ALL BECOME INFECTED!

IT'S ALMOST A CERTAINITY. BUT IT'S NOT AN EARTH DISEASE? MY GUESS IS HE'S INFECTED IT UP BACK ON THAT ASTEROID!

WHAT ABOUT NOT AND RADIATION?



NO PORTIONS OF OUR DRUGS HAVE ANY EFFECT!

AND YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE EVERYTHING!

I'M POSITIVE! WE'LL ALL BE DOWN WITH IT SOON, GUARDS.

UNLESS WE GET RID OF HIM IMMEDIATELY, IS THAT IT? SO THAT WE DON'T BRING THE DISEASE TO EARTH...

PRESIDENT, DON'T RISK THE POPULATION OF EARTH! COULD PRESIDENT BECOME INFECTED AND DIE OF IT?

SEVERAL? SETBACK. TWO MORE SPACE DEATHS? YOU WILL CARRY THE ADMIRAL TO THE ATTACK AND BRING HIM FROM THE SHIP?



IT HAD BEEN A DIFFICULT DECISION TO MAKE, BUT YOU'D MADE IT, AND THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT HAD STARED AT YOU.

BUT CAPTAIN HIS FUNERAL. I HAVE NO TIME TO ARGUE, LIEUTENANT! YOU WILL OBEY? IF NOT, I KNOW HOW TO DEAL WITH ANYBODY! WHAT I AM ORDERING IS FOR THE GOOD OF ALL!



YOU ALREADY KNOWN THAT MEN, BUT HOW COULD YOU HAVE EXPLAINED IT TO HIM... TO THE MEN. WHAT YOU AND THE DOCTOR KNEW THE LIFE MIGHT HAVE BEEN FUNNY WHEN THE LIEUTENANT CAME AT YOU, WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO?



YOU'D STOPPED HIM WITH A STUNNING BLAST, AND THE BUTTERY HAD DIED. A TOWN-ING, THEY'D DIED...



HAD SO, A CASE! HAD ENDED, TWENTY YEARS. YOU'D KNOWN HOW IT WOULD BE, JACK ON EARTH, THE COURT-MARTIAL HADN'T SURPRISED YOU.

THE ADMIRAL DE- SERVED BETTER, MY BODY SHOULD HAVE BEEN BROUGHT HOME! THAT WILL DO, LIEUTENANT! YOU WILL ANSWER QUESTIONS... NOT GIVE OPINIONS!



YOU'D SAY THROUGH IT ALL, SILENTLY, GRIMLY! THE CORP- PORAL MEDICAL OFFICER HAD GIVEN HIS REPORT AND YOU'D TESTIFIED BRIEFLY. YOU'D DONE YOUR DUTY AS YOU'D SEEN IT... FOR THE GOOD OF ALL... FOR EARTH, THAT HAD BEEN YOUR CORP... ALL OF YOUR LIFE! HE, THE COURT- MARTIAL, HADN'T SURPRISED YOU, ONLY THE VERDICT.



WARDEN SAYS YOUR REVEREND... YOU RISE WITH A GRIN.

THEY'LL BE HOWLING AT MY FEELS, WARDEN, BUT I'LL DO OK... AS ALWAYS! AS ONLY YOU MEAN THE SEN- TENCE HADN'T DEATH, THE PENAL COLONIES?



NO, WARDEN! NOT THE PENAL COLONIES! IT SPEAKS THAT CER- TAIN MEN HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING MY CAREER FOR SOME TIME WHEN WHO UNDERSTAND NOW (WARDEN) HAD NO SPACE IS AND THAT ONLY A DIAMOND CAN GET A QUINCE!



IN YOUR HEART, YOU'D ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT IT MIGHT END LIKE THIS, IT HAD TO, AND YOU WROTE NOW, AS YOU TELL, WARDEN THE VERDICT, WHETHER A LIFE- TIME OF COMPLIANCE HAD BEEN WORTH IT.

THEY'VE MADE ME THE NEW GRAND ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET, WARDEN!

